

Dr. Zassenhaus Acts On Her Convictions

Dr. H. Margret Zassenhaus believes that one person can make a difference. And her own life proves the axiom.

At great risk to herself, Dr. Zassenhaus secretly aided Scandinavian political prisoners as a government worker in Germany during World War II. She brought them food and medicine and helped block the execution of hundreds at war's end.

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Because of her philosophy that people must act on their convictions, the Towson physician recalls, she had no choice but to resist Hitler in whatever way she could.

In 1974, the Norwegian government nominated Dr. Zassenhaus for the Nobel Peace Prize for her courage and compassion. The internist, who came to the Baltimore area in 1952, has received many other awards here and abroad.

JUL 28 1976

In her best-selling autobiography, "Walls," Dr. Zassenhaus tells how Germans lost their freedom because they took it for granted. Then, she says, walls of fear, hate and suspicion grew up in the minds of the subjects of the Third Reich, and individuality and caring nearly disappeared.

JUL 28 1976

Dr. Zassenhaus, a sought-after speaker, continues to emphasize her belief that history often is made not by big decisions but by small, seemingly insignificant actions by individuals.

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"One person can't reform the whole world, but people can affect the world they live in," she says. "A small stream can become a great river. We

have unlimited resources in ourselves. All we have to do is apply them, instead of waiting for someone else to do it for us."

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Dr. Zassenhaus was taught the dangers of moral inertia by her father, a historian and expert on religion. Father and daughter would take long

walks and discuss the Bible.

Born July 10, 1916, in Hamburg, Margret graduated from the local university in 1938 with a degree in Scandinavian languages. World War II temporarily halted her

studies to be a doctor. Because of her language ability, Dr. Zassenhaus was given a job in the German Department of Justice keeping track of political prisoners from Norway and Denmark who were in widely scattered prisons.

Her secret aid to them earned her the nickname "angel of the Scandinavian prisoners." Dr. Zassenhaus was invited by both the Norwegian and Danish governments to study medicine in their countries after the war. Leaving Germany in 1948, she chose

Denmark and received her M.D. degree from the University of Copenhagen in 1952.

Coming to the Baltimore area with her late mother, Dr. Zassenhaus served her internship and residency at City Hospitals.

JUL 28 1976

In addition to the Nobel nomination, H. Margret Zassenhaus received the Danish and Norwegian Red Cross Medals in 1948; was knighted by King Olav of Norway in 1964 and by King Frederick of Denmark in 1966; and received the highest civilian award of West Germany in 1969 for work in resettling German war orphans.

In Maryland, Goucher College, Towson State University and the College of Notre Dame of Maryland awarded her honorary degrees in 1975.

Dr. Zassenhaus's work "Walls" was named best book of the year in 1974 by the Christophers of New York and was placed on the best book list for young adults of the American Library Association. "Walls," now in paperback, was published in hard

cover in the United States, Germany, England, France,

Japan, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland and Iceland.

Another book by Dr. Zassenhaus, "On Guard in the Dark," was published in 1948 in Germany, Denmark and Norway. She contributed to European newspapers from 1945 to 1952, authored an article in the journal, *American Medical News*, in 1974 and did one for the *National Observer*, also in 1974.

In 1975 Dr. Zassenhaus was named a director of a local savings and loan association. She recently was featured on a public-television series about courageous persons who put their convictions into practice. This fall she plans to teach an ethics course at Roland Park Country School.

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And H. Margret Zassenhaus says she will continue to speak out against "laziness of the heart," the dangerous condition in which members of a society sit back and stop caring for one other and for their precious institutions.



DR. H. MARGRET ZASSENHAUS